

## Local Nature Reserves

### Seaton Common and Dunes

Seaton Common and Dunes can be split into two distinct sites; the Common and the Dunes. The reserve is also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest under Section 28E of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Driving from the Tees Road to the North Gare (Blue Lagoon) car park you could be forgiven for thinking that the land to the east, stretching from Seaton Carew Golf Club to the Zinc Works Road, is little more than a vast field used only for grazing cattle. The reality is very different as the Common and the dunes are areas of considerable importance for their flora, insects and bird life, encompassing a wide range of habitats including dunes, rocky and sandy beaches and grazed freshwater marsh with dykes (known locally as fleets and stells), pools and seawalls.

Seaton Common covers approximately 75 hectares and its primary importance is as a wet grassland which attracts vast numbers of passage migrants over winter and as a breeding ground for birds in the summer months. As such, it is very carefully managed and monitored. The grazing cattle are vital in keeping down rank grasses which would otherwise render this crucial feeding area unsuitable for many birds, and the numerous dykes maintain water levels essential for wetland plants, amphibians, insects and birds.

Seaton Dunes covers approximately 32 hectares and forms one of the largest sand dune systems between Lindisfarne and the Humber, and in summer exhibits a wonderful display of typical dune flora. You are welcome to wander through the dunes, but please try to keep to the main tracks, leave no litter and start no fires.

Seaton Dunes and Common is a great place to visit throughout the year and attracts finches, buntings, waders and raptors. Kestrel is ever present on the Common and there is a good chance of spying Merlin or a Short-eared owl. In the spring Scandinavian migrants begin to appear and the open ground of the Common attracts large numbers of Fieldfare and Redwing. In winter the Common provides an important feeding ground for many wading birds including large flocks of Widgeon.

Directions: Seaton Common is located south of Seaton Carew just off the A178 Tees Road, north of Hartlepool Power Station. Parking is available at the North Gare Car Park and Seaton Coach Park. The site can be accessed on foot, by cycle or on horseback along Seaton Bridleway from Seaton Carew.

